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Bureau of Land Management Ecoregional Assessment and Implementation

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INTERIOR COLUMBIA BASIN ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PLAN

Involved in both the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP)/Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR) and the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Plan (ICBEMP). His role changed over time from Chief of Forestry/Chief O&C forester in DC to Field Manager and State Director in Oregon. Also involved in task force to implement the plan.

How and why of landscape-scale assessments and planning

Initiated by a directive from President Clinton that a team of scientist create a management plan that could be implemented that would break the gridlock over management of spotted owl/timber in the Pacific Northwest. A team of 4 high level scientist (Gang of Four), Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team (FEMAT), was formed (Jerry Franklin, John Gordan, Norm Johnson, Jack Ward Thomas)

SCALE:

The scale or range of the assessment and plan was from Canada to Northern CA and from the coast to the east side of the Cascades. This scale was largely driven by the range or potential range for the spotted owl. In terms of assuring viability, needed to address complete range of species, which tied together different provinces.

ROLE OF SCIENTISTS/MANAGERS/RESOURCE SPECIALISTS

The "gang of four" pulled together a broad team of scientists who did the assessment and developed 9 alternatives for management (Plan from the Pink Tower). The scientists worked with resource specialists to compile the resource data needed for the assessment. They used inventory data such as FIA, but there was not a lot of good inventory data at that scale for vegetation and hydrology, etc. The team had to sort of "wing it" on the data and use the best knowledge of the scientists and resource specialists about the resources. The scientist had written the plan to be adaptive, so they included a lot of monitoring requirements, but it never really achieved that vision.

Because of the economic impact of the plan, the team also did an economic assessment for the area, but it was not particularly well done, nor was it well accepted.

The managers were not at the table at all throughout the assessment and plan phase. The resource specialists contributed local knowledge and data in the assessment phase, but they were not involved in any analysis or plan development. Once the alternatives were created, however, the specialists from the USFS and the BLM developed the NEPA documents.

ROLE OF THE PUBLIC:
The public had no role in the assessment or planning process through the development of the alternatives. The USFS and BLM conducted traditional NEPA processes through the development of the 1 EIS with 6 RODs. For the most part, they called for different prescriptions based on drier and wetter forests.

How and Why of translating assessment and planning process into day-to-day management

ROLE OF SCIENTISTS/MANAGERS/RESOURCE SPECIALISTS
Once the alternatives were develop and a basic plan was in place, the scientists pretty much went away, and it was up to the managers and resource specialists to figure out how to implement it. The field specialists had to write the EIS and amend the LUPs. There was a steep learning curve for the people in the field because lots of things at that large a scale don't translate directly into LUPs and management protocols.

The 11 agencies involved in implementing the plan (BLM, USFS, NRCS, NPS, FWS, NOAA, States??) created a centralized staff called the Provincial Interagency Committee (PIC) at the regional level to help develop common goals and support field managers and staff with implementation. The PIC took the processes and directives proposed at the regional level, and attempted to translate that into planning protocols at the more local, watershed level. Through an iterative process of discussions and proposed management actions up and down between the regional and local level, they worked out how to implement the plan on the ground. They also had a geospatial group at the state office level to compile and manage the data for the assessments and ongoing monitoring.

Many of the processes identified in the NWFP were not "business as usual." The scientist had given very clear directives on how they wanted the agencies to manage, to ensure accountability. For example, the plan contained very prescriptive processes for assessments so there would be consistency across jurisdictions. As a result, the resource specialists had to learn a lot to implement in the field. For example, they had to develop survey protocols and management protocols to survey the over 400 species in the plan area. Ultimately, the people in the field learned a lot about surveying management species, and they realized how many species and how much habitat is not on federal lands.

ROLE OF THE PUBLIC:
Many public groups and local governments, such as the timber industry, the provinces and counties, the environmental community, and labor opposed the whole assessment and planning process. There was the potential for huge economic and social impacts from the plan, and it still allowed for harvest of older forests. To address these issues, formal FACA chartered committees, called Provincial Advisory Committees (PACs) were formed when the BLM and USFS started trying to implement the NWF plan in 1995. The PACs included representatives from key interest groups. There was a lot of distrust and opposition at the beginning, so the PACs were instrumental in building relationships and trust. Some of the PAC representatives had strong resource backgrounds, so they could be instrumental in helping to translate things from the large scale into local management. For example, they helped establish a joint

monitoring program. The scale was a real issue, since many of the provinces could not "see themselves" or their influence in the management plans. Some of the PACs were very successful at getting public input and keeping their constituents informed on what was going on, but in general, the PACs were a "mixed bag." Eventually, the PACs lost steam as the members started building more trust and confidence in the agencies. They were in existence for about 10 years, but in about 2005 the local agencies were given the discretion on whether or not to keep their PACs in place. Most of them were disbanded because the members had become so burned out.

What worked and didn't work??

What worked well:

- *Assessment and plan were done quickly.* The scientists were able to make decisions quickly and move along quickly.
- *Specialists learned a lot about monitoring.*
- *On-the-ground successes* in improving owl habitat and water quality.

What didn't work:

- *There was no buy-in or support.* Because there was no management or public input, there was no buy-in, so the agencies had to build capacity and engage the public in implementation.
- *Implementation was slowed significantly.* Because the plan was so prescriptive, it took a lot of time for field personnel to work out protocols.
- *Scientists are not planners – they overlooked key legislation.* Because the scientists did not look at the agency mission or regulations, they failed to address the O&C Act, which required a certain amount of timber harvest on BLM lands. Because they used only the USFS regulations as the foundation, the BLM was left open to litigation.
- *No improvement in timber management.* Because of the litigation over the O&C Act and the controversy over the economic assessment, there was no resolution on the timber harvesting issues.

INTERIOR COLUMBIA BASIN ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PLAN (ICBEMP)

How and why of landscape-scale assessments and planning

Initiated by the various departments regional-level foresters for ID, OR, MT to develop an ecosystem plan to help manage those issues that crossed jurisdictional boundaries (primarily water/fisheries, but also wildfire, invasives, etc.). The original intent was to do the same kind of thing that was done for the NWFP, (i.e. create a landscape-scale assessment and plan) but to be more collaborative.

SCALE:

The scale or range of the assessment was all the Columbia Basin, which included lands in WA, OR, ID. This scale was chosen largely by the scale of the ecosystem issues the entities were trying to jointly manage.

ROLE OF SCIENTISTS/MANAGERS/RESOURCE SPECIALISTS

The managers wanted the same kind of synthesis of science and data collection to produce a scientific assessment that was accomplished by the FEMAT. They engaged the scientists from the Pacific Northwest Research Station (PNW Station), who were the primary scientists throughout the process.

The managers were the key drivers of this process. Initially, they tried to develop a plan for the whole area, but it became unwieldy because there were so many representatives from local, state, and federal governments. They realized that it would be impossible to develop an LUP over that many jurisdictions and that large of an area because decisions would have to be so generalized. The scale dwarfed most of the entities – or in his words, "At that scale, a single county couldn't see themselves" in the decisions. However, the group decided that there was still value in the course-scale assessment, so they elected to move forward on that, but to leave it up to each of the entities to do individual LUPs.

ROLE OF THE PUBLIC:

There were efforts to engage the public from the start. However, because of the scale of the assessment and proposed planning process, most of the meetings were very large, and people were not that engaged. There was a lot of information exchange, but not much real collaboration.

Translating assessment and planning process into day-to-day management

ROLE OF SCIENTISTS/MANAGERS/RESOURCE SPECIALISTS

The managers were very involved in identifying those issues that crossed jurisdictional boundaries. They also stayed involved in the planning processes at the LUP level. Based on the issues identified, the scientists produced the assessment with broad course-scale data, but they were also involved with taking the course-scale assessment and "walking it down" into normal LUP and other planning processes. The resource specialists were also very involved in the discussions of how the synthesis would be implemented.

ROLE OF THE PUBLIC:

Even during the BLM planning process, the scale was too large for meaningful public engagement. There was 1 EIS done for the whole west side of Oregon. As a result, the districts were not that involved, so they lost the opportunity for the district staff to meet with the stakeholders and involve them in deciding on how things should be managed. It became clear that collaboration is most effective at the local level.

What worked and didn't work??

What worked well:

- *Assessment fit in well with the planning process.*

What didn't work:

- *Too large a scale for joint planning.*
- *Public engagement was not effective.*

Lessons Learned – What would you do next time?

1. Have groups working at 2 scales.
    a. One group would be a high level collaborative group tasked with:
        i. identifying the issues (shaping the management questions) that need to be managed across a larger scale (i.e. habitat or climate change)
        ii. developing principles on how scientific assessments and management needs to be done across jurisdictional boundaries (i.e. common principles and processes).
        iii. identifying and meshing the diverse values that need to be considered and work on developing buy-in
    b. Another group would be at the more localized, district level. This group would be tasked with:
        i. Taking the data from the scientific assessment and scaling it down and explaining it to the stakeholders and partners.
        ii. Stepping down the direction from the assessment into local district planning efforts
        iii. Engaging the public to include key stakeholder groups
2. Use a third party neutral to do an assessment and facilitate the discussions at the broad scale
3. Optimum scale will need to be driven by the issues addressed
4. Scientists, managers, resource specialists and public all need to be engaged at both levels
5. Scientists:
    a. Scientists and managers need to work together through the assessment and implementation processes. Managers are not trying to influence the science, but rather to help focus the research to inform decisions.
    b. The scientists need to be held responsible for addressing the management issues identified. They are responsible for helping to step it down to local planning. They should work with the resource specialists to mesh the course scale and fine-scale data.
    c. Use an independent selection process to identify scientists. Don't just use research station scientists. Possibly use the Institute for Natural Resources to make the selection.
6. Managers:
    a. The managers should work with other stakeholders at the broad scale to identify the key management questions
    b. Role of managers in the implementation is to ensure that the planning is done correctly and follow correct procedures.
    c. The managers need to ensure that the broader groups comes up with standards for data, and that there is accountability at the local level for adhering to those data standards and getting the data to the steward.
7. Resource specialists
    a. The resource specialists need to work with the scientists to integrate the broad, course-scale data with more fine-scaled to develop the LUP.
    b. The resource specialists need to develop and carry out the processes and procedures.

c. As you go into plan evaluation, resource specialists need to use joint monitoring and assessment to ensure transparency.

8. Public/Stakeholders:
    a. Engage stakeholders at both levels to be sure that the values are included
    b. Make it open enough and wide enough to engage key stakeholders.
    c. Use FACA committees at the local level to involve the pubic up front in planning to support the decision process.
    d. Make certain the representatives see the management issues as worth their time. If not, they won't want to put in the time and commitment necessary for a FACA group.
    e. Engage the stakeholders up front in the planning and implementation to build trust and confidence in ability of agency to implement. Their attendance and interest will drop off when they see the agency is managing well.

Key Assumptions

	Assumption	True	False	Explanation
ECOREGIONAL ASSESMENTS must be:				
1.	Focused on key questions			Yes – with caveat that key stakeholders/partners need to be involved in identifying key questions.
2.	Grounded in conceptual models linking key attributes and change agents			Yes.
3.	Focused on synthesizing existing information not on collecting new information or on conducting research			Yes. However, where gaps are identified in the data, then those should represent priorities for further research or data collection to fill the gaps.
4.	Transparent			Yes – throughout.
5.	Approached as an ongoing process not as a one-time ad hoc effort (regions and units of analysis must be systematically defined, data must be managed)			True and false. The big emphasis will be on the first assessment. After that, there should be follow up with monitoring. The big issue will be who manages the data and getting the local levels to follow protocols and get the data to the steward. This is a big task and a big expense.
6.	Scaled to address landscape issues but not too large to be politically unmanageable			Exactly.
7.	Informative not decisional			Yes – but decisions need to be made on the key management questions and the shared goals and principles and protocols.
8.	Other			

	Assumption	True	False	Explanation
ECOREGIONAL DIRECTION must be:				
9.	Developed through an iterative process involving multiple organizational levels Developed through a collaborative process to the extent cross-jurisdictional action is required			Yes. Use core groups such as the PIC to help with iterative process, if needed. Collaborate to the greatest extent possible. Use PAC/FACA type groups at the local level (if the interest is great enough) to help with decision-making and monitoring/evaluations.
10.	Consistent with the public disclosure, public participation, and interagency coordination requirements associated with planning and environmental impact assessments			Transparency is critical. The more meaningful public engagement up front to help work out issues, the better for building buy-in. Possibly extend cooperating agency status to local governments and tribes so they can be involved. FACA group at the local level is possible.
11.	Grounded in agency mission and authority			Yes.
12.	Built on existing agency work processes such as land use planning, use authorization, budgeting, and project design and implementation			Yes. But requires lots more coordination across agencies for budgets. Need high level buy-in at the department level to make sure all the partners will have the budgets they need to stay involved. Also need lots of cross agency coordination for joint monitoring, managing joint data bases and assessments, and plan evaluations. Also need to work on developing a shared vision across agencies for those key management issues that need to be managed cross boundaries.

	Assumption	True	False	Explanation
13.	Other			
MANAGEMENT must have the opportunity to:				
14.	Identify the key management questions the assessment will answer			Yes – in conjunction with scientists and stakeholders
15.	Participate in critical decision points during the assessment process and in the development of ecoregional direction			Yes. During the assessment and direction, the managers need to stay involved. They can't just hand it off to the steering committee. However, the managers need to provide collaborative leadership, making decisions through a more collaborative approach. It is important for the manager to have a resource background or at least a firm understanding because they will need to understand the issues.
16.	Other			
FIELD RESOURCE specialists must have the opportunity to:				
17.	Validate and supplement the assessment information with finer-scaled local information			Not everyone needs to be involved, but at least a representative from across the spectrum of disciplines to develop and use the protocols and processes
18.	Help define how assessment information may be used in day to day management activities			Yes – again with an interdisciplinary team approach – define within the limits of what portion they will do.
19.	Other			
PARTNERS must have the opportunity to:				
20.	Help identify the key management questions the assessment will			Yes – should get buy-in and support at that level – and determine level of interest.

	Assumption	True	False	Explanation
	answer			
21.	See their work incorporated into the assessment where appropriate			That will be related to the scale and process.
22.	Help develop ecoregional direction			This again is related to scale and process
23.	Other			
What other suggestions do you have for an effective process and use				
24.				Determine if you really have the interests to support the collaborative effort. Issues have to be big enough or important enough to people for them to stay involved – must really focus on the key issues/burning needs. In the worlds of dwindling resources at all levels, people don't want/can't to go extra meetings. There are so many processes that are duplicative, so you confuse the public and lose their interest. If you try to engage people, and then they don't see the benefit – you lose their interest and lose credibility and integrity. Should do a good assessment first to determine what the issues are and the level of interest and how to best approach the issues.
25.				